



## **OP-EDS**

### **Fossil fuels not enemy — they're bridge to future**

**By Rep. Ralph Hall (R-Texas)**

**01/30/08**

As the oldest member of the House of Representatives, I've seen and lived through a number of challenges facing our country. The Great Depression began when I was 8 and ended about the time I graduated from high school. I remember what it was like when many went without and were hungry, so I have always fought to protect my children and grandchildren from the same experience.

This is why I am always questioning the cost and effect of public policy proposals. Many economists have written that a mandatory cap-and-trade program will hurt the economy. Our GDP will fall, we will lose jobs, and electricity prices will rise. The European Union experienced this, and despite the sacrifice to their economy they are still unable to meet the targets agreed to in the Kyoto Protocol. Yet, there are still those in Congress who want to subject our country to a similar fate.

Our government has discussed global warming and climate change since the 1960s, and increasingly stepped up its efforts in recent years. The Energy Policy Act of 2005 (EPACT) included a title on Climate Change that smartly focuses on technology that reduces greenhouse gas intensity, and technology deployment in developing countries. In 2005, the Bush administration announced the formation of the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate that includes Australia, Canada, China, India, Japan and the Republic of Korea and whose goals are to increase energy security, reduce pollution and reduce the emission of greenhouse gases (GHGs) while promoting economic growth and poverty reduction. This is a smart way to approach the problem of global warming — by focusing on technologies that will help reduce GHG emissions, and by engaging those countries that have bypassed us as the largest emitters of carbon dioxide, and those on our heels.

As the ranking member of the Committee on Science and Technology and a senior member of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, I am in the unique position to help push toward technological advances needed in order for our businesses, our citizens and our country as a whole to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. What we need now is to focus efforts on research, development and demonstration into all alternative sources of energy and carbon-reducing technologies to decrease the level of imported fuels, increase the usage of domestic resources, and reduce emissions of GHGs. Arbitrary caps on GHG emissions will not achieve actual reductions unless the technology is in place to do so.

Alternative energy sources are not a new idea. EPACT included a title on renewable energy that focused on geothermal, wind, solar, biofuels and hydropower. These alternatives are already in use and with advances in technology will only become more prevalent. There is no doubt that

alternative energy will play an important role in our future energy mix.

For example, my home state of Texas is the leading producer of wind energy in the country. However, we have to be all-encompassing and not exclude such alternatives as clean coal and nuclear. Coal is the nation's most abundant resource and nuclear power is a proven, safe and available source of electricity.

It will come as no surprise to those who know me that I am a strong believer that fossil fuels can and must play a part in our energy mix for the near future. If we want to increase energy security, we must increase domestic production of oil, coal and natural gas. The U.S. has vast domestic resources available. Continued research and development into advanced technologies permits the recovery and use of these resources cleanly, efficiently and in an environmentally friendly way. Fossil fuels are not the enemy, but the necessary bridge to the alternative fuels of the future. Let's not make an enemy out of a friend that has enabled our country to become the great nation that it is today.

*Hall is the ranking member of the House Science and Technology Committee.*